



**Dr. Thomas Ficarra**  
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Dear SOMSD Families and Staff:

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2018-2019 school year! This year, we are moving into a new phase. We are looking forward to finalizing our foundational work and taking our educational vision to a higher level. The reconfiguration of the district facilities offers us an opportunity to begin the much anticipated educational renaissance of the school district. We are currently examining exciting new approaches to learning, which can be woven into the refurbishing of our facilities on student-centered learning, multiple pathways and innovative teaching designed to promote creative problem solving, and student engagement.

We are also moving forward with 4 major areas of necessary foundational work:

**Consistency** – My review of the District this past year uncovered areas which were in need of more systematic and consistent approaches. This year, we are instituting new processes that will allow for a consistent implementation of the revised curriculum guides to drive lesson planning, assessments and data driven instruction. Additionally, the Intervention and Referral Services process will be launched and supported through ongoing training.

**Access and Equity** – The STEM Reconfiguration adopted in February 2018 reduced the leveling in our middle schools and Columbia High School. To support students and staff with the new configuration, we hired five (5) additional staff members for this year – two (2) at CHS to reduce class size, and one (1) at each middle school to work with students and classroom teachers– and also appointed one (1) guidance counselor to monitor student progress and facilitate support and interventions when needed.

**Long Range Facilities and Integration Plan** – Over the summer, we reviewed the community feedback provided in response to our initial plan, and worked with the architects and redistricting experts to address key issues. This fall, we will introduce the revised plan for additional feedback, prior to requesting preliminary Board approval for developing the drawings and specifications required to submit a bonding proposal to the Board of School Estimate in January 2019.

**Superintendent Search** – The Board of Education will work with the community and with executive search firm West Hudson Associates to search for and your next Superintendent.

I hope you enjoy the rest of your summer, and look forward to welcoming you back to school in September. As a school system we have much to be proud of and much to anticipate!

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas Ficarra  
Interim Superintendent